



Senator Ken Jacobsen

46th District Legislative Report

Spring 2002

“Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgement; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.”

These are the words of Edmund Burke, a British statesman and political philosopher who dedicated his life to human rights causes.

Throughout this year’s legislative session, Burke’s words echoed in my mind as the Legislature faced problems ranging from a \$1.5 billion budget shortfall to the gridlock clogging our highways and choking our economy.

With so much at stake, it is clear that our state’s legislative leaders and elected officials need to represent more than just their constituents. Indeed, they must represent the overall needs of the state as well.

Burke was one of the few members of Parliament to speak out in support of the American Revolution; he made the comment quoted above to justify his support of the American colonies. As such, he established a legacy of lawmaking based not on consensus, but on an independent commitment to truth. This was the spirit I took with me to Olympia, and it is the spirit I have tried to inspire in my fellow legislators. In many ways we were successful this year, but there are still many challenges ahead.

I look forward to hearing your ideas as we continue working to make this state a more livable place. It is an honor serving as your state senator.

Sincerely,

Ken Jacobsen

Keep In Touch!

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Committees

- Chair, Natural Resources, Parks & Shorelines
- Environment, Energy & Water
- Higher Education
- Transportation



Budget

After years of economic growth, the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and a slowing economy plunged Washington into a deep recession. Layoffs at Boeing and at technology firms accounted for the loss of tens of thousands of jobs in the Puget Sound region. The shockwaves reverberated through many other sectors of the state work force.

With our state's heavy reliance on the sales tax, funding for key public services suffers tremendously during recessions. Because consumer spending falls much faster than personal income, the state feels a quick and significant loss of revenue as consumer spending dries up.

At the beginning of this year, legislators faced a budget deficit of \$1.25

billion, which increased during session to \$1.5 billion. Filling this gap was made even more difficult by the fact that funds we used to rely on are no longer available. Revenue sources such as the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax and the state lottery evaporated when voters approved a number of initiatives.

What's more, demand for state services in a number of areas has steadily increased:

- **public schools** need to make room for thousands of new students;
- **prison** populations continue to rise;
- **colleges and universities** need to make room for workers retraining for new careers, and young people who are part of the "Baby Boom Echo"; and,

• **wildfires** throughout the state last summer drove fire-fighting costs to record levels.

The result of these colliding challenges was a budget that virtually no one liked. Almost half of the budget, \$684 million, is balanced with cuts and savings, including cuts to state government, public schools and higher education.

The other half of the budget hole is filled with reserve funds and transfers, new revenue, and by borrowing against a portion of future payments of the state's settlement with the tobacco industry.

The budget that passed this session represents a true compromise between the Senate and the House

of Representatives. While it does not solve all of our problems, it at least responds to the deep recession we found ourselves in after suffering a catastrophe that no one could have predicted. Even so, the state's leading economists predict the recession will not turn around until next year, meaning legislators will face even more tough decisions in the future.

For more information about the state economy or the recently passed budget, please consult the Senate Ways & Means Committee's web page:
<http://www.leg.wa.gov/senate/scs/wm/default.html>
on the Internet.

Urban legend: The myth of 10,000 new state employees

With the state's current economic problems, some people have suggested simply laying off more state employees as a solution. This suggestion has been fueled by an urban legend circulating on talk radio that claims the number of state employees in Washington has increased by 10,000 since Gov. Gary Locke was elected.

This is untrue. The Office of Financial Management reports the number of state employees has actually increased by 8,800, which still seems like a lot until one considers where these new employees are working:

- **Prisons**, get-tough-on-crime laws and initiatives are sending more people to prison to serve longer sentences. In response, 1,000 new guards and prison workers were hired to serve the state's growing prison population.
- **Universities and community colleges**, when the Legislature increased enrollments at state colleges and universities, 4,500 new employees were hired to support these new enrollments.

• **Tax oversight**, additional auditors and other personnel were hired to ensure that all businesses are paying the appropriate amount of sales and B&O taxes.

• **Growing state population**, the remaining new employees provide various public services to meet the needs of the state's growing population. In the past five years, the state's population has increased nearly 500,000 people, so there are more children in our classrooms, more seniors in our nursing homes and hospitals, and more people lining up to get new licenses. Put simply, there is more demand for state services.

We must continually work to provide public services in the most efficient way possible, but we must balance efficiencies with the needs of a growing populace. This is the essence of responsible governing.



Transportation

On the closing night of this year's legislative session, I took one of the proudest votes I have ever taken in the Legislature. Along with 33 of my Senate colleagues, I voted to pass a landmark 10-year, \$7.7 billion proposal that would have paid for long-overdue upgrades to roads, ferries, rail and public transportation in Washington.

Showing tremendous leadership and political courage, the Senate passed this measure with strong

bipartisan support on a 34-15 vote. I was proud that so many of my colleagues realized the importance of transportation to the state's economy. Members from both sides of the aisle and all corners of the state voted to solve our state's traffic problems this year, in Olympia, before another summer of construction projects could be lost, and more businesses could leave the state.

In the hours that followed, that pride turned to dismay as the proposal failed to

garner enough votes in the House and became a ballot measure voters will decide in November.

For more information on transportation and the proposed transportation package, please go to the Senate Transportation Committee's web site at <http://stc.leg.wa.gov/> on the Internet.

What will be on the November ballot:

- a 9-cent increase in the statewide gas tax;
- a gross-weight fee increase of 30 percent for commercial trucks; and,
- a 1 percent vehicle sales tax increase.

What the taxes would pay for:

- \$5.5 billion for highways, including improvements to Interstates 405 and 90 and State Route 520, as well as congestion improvement and high-occupancy vehicle lanes in central Puget Sound.
- \$330 million for local areas, so that cities and counties can improve streets, bolster local economies and increase school safety.
- \$681 million for ferries.
- \$294 million for rail, including \$31 million for improvements to the Seattle-to-Everett passenger-rail track.
- \$819 million for public transportation, including transit, park-and-ride lots, commute trip reduction grants and van pools.

Monorail: the future is now

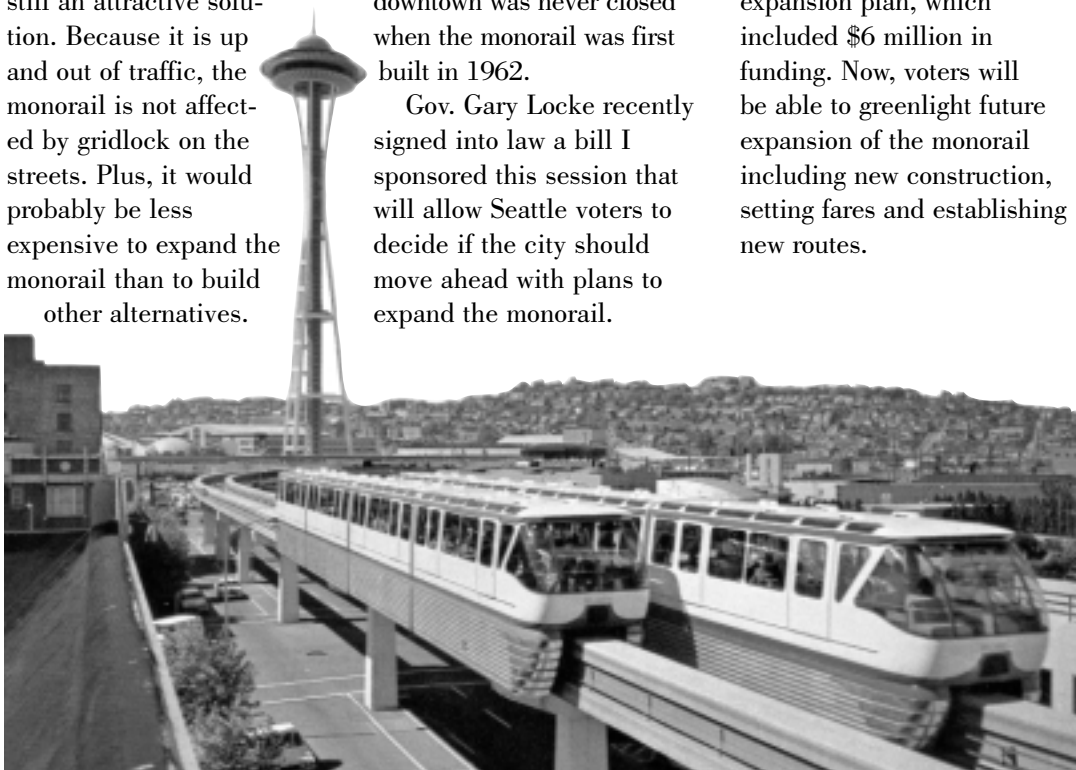
When it was first introduced in 1962, the Seattle monorail was hailed "the world's most modern transportation system."

Forty years later, it is still an attractive solution. Because it is up and out of traffic, the monorail is not affected by gridlock on the streets. Plus, it would probably be less expensive to expand the monorail than to build other alternatives.

Not to mention, monorail construction is less disruptive to traffic, business and neighborhood life than other forms of mass transit construction. For example, Fifth Avenue downtown was never closed when the monorail was first built in 1962.

Gov. Gary Locke recently signed into law a bill I sponsored this session that will allow Seattle voters to decide if the city should move ahead with plans to expand the monorail.

In 1997, voters approved a study of an expanded monorail system, and, in 2000, voters approved an initiative authorizing the development of a monorail expansion plan, which included \$6 million in funding. Now, voters will be able to greenlight future expansion of the monorail including new construction, setting fares and establishing new routes.





Higher Education

For years, members serving on the Legislature's higher education committees have debated the balance between access to higher education and quality.

On one hand, some people say low tuition is the only way to ensure access for all. On the other side are people like me who say, "What good is low tuition if students can't get into the classes they want, and our colleges and universities are losing their best professors to out-of-state schools willing to pay them what they are worth?"

The debate over college tuition came to a head this year when the Senate passed

a bill giving state colleges and universities unprecedented freedom to raise tuition. For a limited time, governing boards would be able to set tuition for all students, except resident undergraduates.

Although the bill died in the House, the basic premise was resurrected in the budget, which allows differential tuition setting for graduate students and out-of-state undergraduates for one year. Increases could be based on a program, course, or even the time of day or day of the week when a class occurs.

With the state facing a \$1.5 billion budget shortfall, tuition increases were

inevitable. Resident undergraduates face increases capped at 16 percent at the University of Washington and Washington State University; 14 percent at the state's other three universities and The Evergreen State College; and, 12 percent for students attending state community and technical colleges.

As the state continues to navigate through difficult economic times, the debate over tuition setting will undoubtedly continue.

My basic feeling about tuition policy is this: If the Legislature is willing to fully fund our colleges and universities, then we have

earned the right to tell them what to do. However, if we cannot make that commitment, then maybe we should give them some flexibility and start treating college administrators like adults, instead of treating them like adolescents.

Our state also needs to focus on providing adequate financial aid to support students who would not otherwise be able to cover the expense of a college education. We should move from the current system of institutional support to a system of individual support by providing state-assisted, targeted subsidies to students who need them.

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Contact Me
As always, feel free to contact me with your issues or concerns. Thank you again for the privilege of representing you in the Washington State Senate.

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